

Great Lakes Bulletin

DECEMBER 18, 2020

SERVING "THE QUARTERDECK OF THE NAVY" FOR 102 YEARS

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USO Great Lakes Delivers Donations of Holiday Cheer

Story and photo by MC2 Brigitte Johnston, Naval Station Great Lakes Public Affairs



The United Services Organization at Naval Station Great Lakes, Illinois, is bringing some holiday cheer to the Sailors of Great Lakes with donations.

The gift packs were created by Carpentersville local, Tina Loizzi, who has taken on this project for a second year. She collected donations to stuff roughly 300 filled stocking gift packs from friends, family and local businesses and handmade the stockings herself. She began knitting stockings last year after her daughter Kaitlin joined the Air Force. Last year she sent 300 stockings to her daughter's base in Wyoming.

"Until my daughter went into the military I did not realize that it can be a lonely place sometimes," said Loizzi. "I made sure to

include a letter or card with each stocking so that military members receiving the stockings would know how appreciated they really are.

"This year I felt it important to do something for the naval base that was right here near me. All military deserve to be very appreciated so this is just my little input that I did happily."

The USO took on these donations to distribute to Sailors from Training Support Center Great Lakes. Over the holiday period, they plan to deliver to the various barracks across the base.

"We have a huge team that helps us find people that want to support the military out in Chicago, in the state, and throughout the nation," said Clarice Bennett, one of 1





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the USO's operations managers. "Especially around the holidays, people start thinking of groups in need and we get reached out to by our team. They ask if we have space for this and – of course – we always do. We went ahead and accepted this incredibly generous gift of two to almost three hundred stockings full of stuff."

Some Sailors will receive one of these handmade stockings, filled to the brim with snacks, toiletries, treats, and handwritten notes. Ninety percent of the donations came from businesses such as Otto Engineering – who made a monetary donation – and Primrose Candy Co. in Chicago – who donated heart candy.

With the operational training bubble stood up for TSC Great Lakes Sailors throughout most of 2020, gestures like this remind them that others are thinking of them.

"Some of us have been on base since [the pandemic] started," said Electrician's Mate Fireman Nicholas Brooks, from Tewksbury, Massachusetts. "It's nice to know that people outside are thinking of us here on base and trying to help us out."

"My biggest hope is that the military members who received the stockings will feel good and know that they are making a difference in the decision that they have made to be a part of the United States military," said Loizzi. "I hope they feel a virtual hug when they receive the stockings."

USO Great Lakes serves over 60,000 Sailors a year, said Burnett. Throughout the holidays, they have planned snack deliveries to the barracks, a visit from Santa, and continuing a grab-n-go service to pick up snacks and other goodies.

"For the Sailors that can't go home, we're just making sure they have something over the holidays and that they're being taken care of and thought of in this time," said Burnett. "Over [the holidays], we're here to provide material support. We'll make sure we support whatever we can in whatever way we can."

The biggest USO in the Midwest, Great Lakes USO serves more than 50 commands across northern Illinois and provides Sailors and their dependents with services such as internet connectivity, food, beverages, travel services and a place to rest and relax. It is the only USO in Illinois that is not located in an airport.

For more information on the USO of Illinois, go to <https://illinois.uso.org/> or visit <https://www.facebook.com/usoofillinois>.

CNRMA visits Great Lakes, thanks Sailors and civilians for support to Fleet

Story by MC2 Brigitte Johnston, Naval Station Great Lakes Public Affairs

Rear Adm. Charles Rock, Commander, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, visited Naval Station Great Lakes Dec. 3 and 4, 2020.

Rock toured various parts of the base, speaking with civilians and Sailors alike from NSGL, Naval Service Training Command and Training Support Center Great Lakes.

"We are grateful that Admiral Rock took the time to visit us here at Great Lakes," said Capt. Ray Leung, NSGL commanding officer. "Our mission is to support the Fleet with trained and ready Sailors, and we greatly appreciate his support of that mission."

Rock spoke with leadership from throughout the installation as well as staff from Morale, Welfare, and Recreation; the firehouse; security personnel; and TSC students.

"Being here and seeing the resources and seeing what's going on can give a better perspective of what's going on," said Jerrick Fabro, the fitness

manager for Great Lakes Morale, Welfare, and Recreation. “We’ve had a lot of support and resources to help build our programs.”

“From my perspective, you’re doing a remarkable job,” said Rock in a meeting with base leadership, department heads, and senior advisors. “I came to say ‘thank you.’ What you do matters in a huge way.”

Rock primarily discussed the level of mission support NSGL has provided to tenant commands during the COVID-19 pandemic, including supporting Recruit Training Command and Training Support Center Great Lakes with logistics, security and socially distanced recreation. RTC is the only boot camp for the U.S. Navy, supplying the Fleet with over

40,000 Sailors in fiscal year 2020. CNRMA is the regional coordinator for all shore-based naval personnel and shore activities in the Mid-Atlantic region, which encompasses 20 states, 14 installations, including NSGL, and 50 Naval Operational Support Centers (NOSCs).

Opened in 1911, NSGL is the Navy’s largest training installation and the home of the Navy’s only boot camp. Located on over 1,600 acres overlooking Lake Michigan, the installation includes 1,153 buildings with 39 on the National Register of Historic Places. NSGL supports over 50 tenant commands and elements as well as over 20,000 Sailors, Marines, Soldiers, and DoD civilians who live and work on the installation.

Great Lakes Gold Star program, NEX team up for Holiday Memorial Tree event

Story and photo by John Sheppard, Naval Station Great Lakes Public Affairs

Julie Boesel, Navy Gold Star coordinator, coordinated with Chris Ponchak, Great Lakes Navy Exchange general manager, to recognize Navy Gold Star families in the Midwest with a Holiday Memorial Tree in the front entrance of the Navy Exchange in Burkey Mall on Dec. 7.

Capt. Ray Leung, Naval Station Great Lakes commanding officer, and Boesel spoke at a short ceremony on Monday during which Sailors decorated the tree with photos memorializing Sailors who died on active duty.

“The holidays are such a wonderful time for everyone, but for those families that have lost someone it’s not such a great time because all the memories are there of the past holidays that they have had,” said Boesel.

“The military and the services are here for you guys 100 percent,” said Leung. “We will do the best that we can every day to make sure that we remember those who have moved on.”

“In talking to all these families... they talk about their feelings about their loved one not being here,” said Boesel.

“Each and every day they remember them and have not forgotten them. It’s really difficult for them.”

“Due to everything going on with COVID and the uncertainty of locations on base being open for the event, the NEX volunteered to support,” said Ponchak. “This was our first time participating with Kerri (George, Great Lakes Fleet & Family Support Center) and her team on this event. We plan on doing it at Burkey next year. We also plan on working with Kerri’s team again in May when it’s Gold Star Family Month. We think it’s a very important program that deserves the proper attention.”

Boesel works with approximately 600 Gold Star family members, including the family of Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Jose Barrera, whose surviving family members attended the ceremony. This year marks the third year that



Great Lakes has participated in the Holiday Memorial Tree program. “I’ve made a promise to these families that we will not forget them,” said Boesel.

The NEX’s Theresa Hagan, Elaine Kueking and Kirsten Acuna created the visual set-up for the event. After the remarks, approximately a dozen Sailors from Great Lakes area commands decorated the tree to honor their shipmates who had passed on.

The Navy Gold Star program was established to help provide continuing support for surviving family members of fallen service members. The program honors Gold Star Families throughout the year by hosting events that pay tribute to their lost loved ones, providing resources and opportunities to connect with one another and to their greater Navy family.

For more about the program, go to <https://www.navygoldstar.com/>.

Naval Medical Forces Atlantic Hospitals to Be Among First to Receive COVID-19 Vaccine

Story by Tia Nichole McMillen, Naval Medical Forces Atlantic

In coordination with the Defense Health Agency and the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, three of Naval Medical Forces Atlantic's (MEDLANT) Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) are among the first Department of Defense (DoD) hospitals to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Department of Defense chosen locations include Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Naval Hospital Jacksonville, and Naval Hospital Pensacola. Vaccines started arriving Tuesday, Dec. 15 and vaccinations at these facilities are expected to begin Wednesday, Dec. 16.

Vaccination is voluntary and, in addition to front line health care workers, commands are coordinating with installation leadership to administer vaccines to first responders, such as emergency management service personnel and security forces.

MEDLANT Commander, Rear Adm. Darin Via recognizes the vaccine's ability to strengthen and safeguard our personnel and our national security capabilities.

"As healthcare professionals, we commit to protecting the health and readiness of our Sailors and Marines," said Via. "This vaccine lowers the public health risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and protects our front line workers, our military force, our community, and our nation."

This plan is a whole-of-government coordinated distribution strategy for prioritizing and administering COVID-19 vaccines that will strengthen our ability to protect our people, maintain readiness, and support the nation's COVID-19 response.

The DoD is administering vaccinations using a phased approach. Early in the COVID-19 vaccination program, there will be a finite supply of COVID-19 vaccine.

Distribution prioritization within DoD will be consistent with data-driven Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for national prioritization. The DoD initially expects a limited quantity of COVID-19 vaccines before the end of 2020, and a rolling delivery schedule to MTFs and other health care facilities.

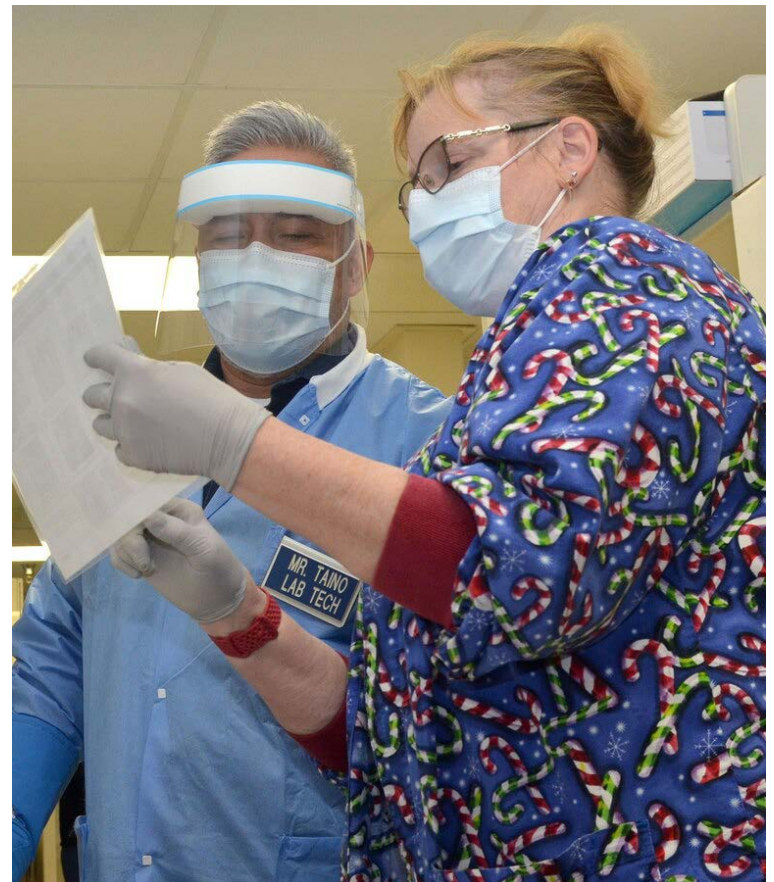
All DoD personnel who receive the vaccine will continue to wear appropriate masks, practice physical distancing, wash hands, and follow restriction of movement guidance and safety measures as directed.

"The end-state is that we will be able to reduce the burden of this disease in high-risk populations and, simultaneously, mitigate risk to military operations," said Via.

Vaccines fight disease by producing an immune response within the body. Sometimes that means flu-like

symptoms, such as aches, headache and fever. This is normal and a sign that your body is creating antibodies to protect you from COVID-19. Vaccines for COVID-19 are only available after they are demonstrated to be safe and effective in large phase-three clinical trials, have been authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and have been manufactured and distributed safely and securely. MEDLANT is dedicated to providing the latest information about the vaccines available as it is released so that DoD personnel and TRICARE beneficiaries can make informed decisions. You can follow us at <https://m.facebook.com/MEDLANT/> or contact the MEDLANT regional public affairs officer, Tia Nichole McMillen, tia.n.mcmillen.civ@mail.mil.

Naval Medical Forces Atlantic, headquartered in Portsmouth, Virginia, provides well-trained medical experts, operating as high performance teams, to project medical power in support of naval superiority. Led by Rear Adm. Darin K. Via, the command ensures the warfighter is medically ready; makes certain medical forces are manned, trained, and equipped to meet the operational mission; and increases the survivability of those who go in harm's way.



Training Support Center Students Enjoy a Free Lunch From Area Restaurants

Story by Brian Walsh, Training Support Center Great Lakes Public Affairs



Over 1,460 students at Training Support Center (TSC) Great Lakes were treated to lunch from an area restaurant December 10.

Funded by Moral, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Department and distribution assistance from TSC Petty Officer Association (POA) and Chief Petty Officer Association (CPOA), the barbeque arrived in a catering truck to treat students housed in five barracks to pulled pork sandwiches along with sides.

To complete the mission of getting lunches to all students, MWR and TSC staff started events in other barracks on Tuesday. Over 1,410 boxed fried chicken lunches on Tuesday and two box trucks filled with enough pizza to feed over 1,500 students on Wednesday.

“It was priceless seeing the students happy,” said Navy Military Training Instructor Chief Machinist’s Mate Willie Carter. “I’m happy that we are able to break up the monotony and benefit morale. Everyone at the command is family. Bringing in food for them is a small way to let them know that we care.”

According to TSC Commanding Officer Capt. Pat Sutton, providing lunch to the students was an awesome act to boost morale and let them know that we support them after months of adhering to mitigating guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 while maintaining mission readiness.

“MWR and TSC staff did an outstanding job planning and executing the events,” Sutton said. “The food was well received by our students. It was a small gesture to let them know that we acknowledge and appreciate their hard work.”

Fleet and Family Support Center is now open Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., for most services. The **USO** and **MWR** are either closed or providing limited services until further notice. For any questions regarding upcoming events, classes, or other concerns, please contact the appropriate organization.

Thank you!



Visit www.navywmrgreatlakes.com
for more information



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'Wreaths Across America' comes to Great Lakes

Story by John Sheppard, Naval Station Great Lakes Public Affairs

About two dozen volunteers helped place wreaths at the Great Lakes Naval Cemetery on Dec. 17 as part of the national "Wreaths Across America" campaign.

The effort locally was led by Julie Boesel, Navy Gold Star coordinator for Naval Station Great Lakes. Forty-eight wreaths were placed on graves in the cemetery.

"The mission behind Wreaths Across America is to make sure that no one is ever forgotten," said Boesel. "Their motto is to remember our veterans, honor those who serve, to teach your children that freedom is not free."

"I think it was a good experience for the Sailors who volunteered. They got to honor their shipmates who'd passed on and learn a bit of history about our cemetery," said Capt. Ray Leung, NSGL commanding officer.

Wreath-laying ceremonies will be held at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as at more than 1,600 additional locations in all 50 U.S. states, at sea and abroad, on Dec. 19.

For more about the Navy Gold Star program, go to www.facebook.com/NavyGoldStar. For more about Wreaths Across America, visit www.wreathscrossamerica.org.



Happy Holidays

FROM THE STAFF AT THE

Great Lakes Bulletin

SEE YOU IN THE NEW YEAR!